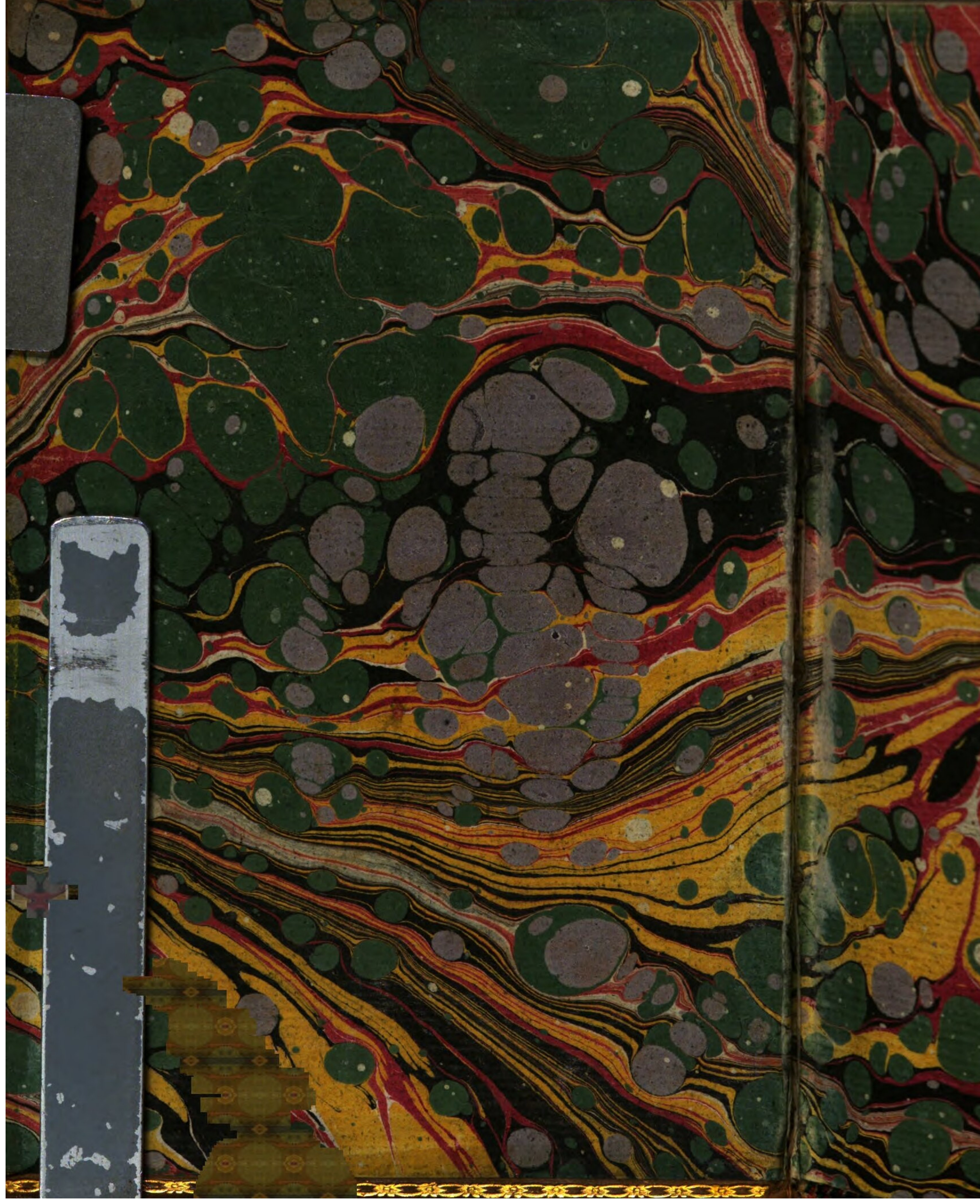








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WENCESLAUS HOLLAR.

THE
DANCE
OF
DEATH;

PAINTED
BY
(ans)
H. HOLBEIN,

AND
ENGRAVED
BY
(enceslaus)
W. HOLLAR.



[Ca. 1800.]

Stadtbibliothek
Augsburg

1958.424



HANS HOLBEIN PAINTER.

ON THE
DANCE OF DEATH.

THE celebrity of a subject which has been distinguished by the labours of such artists as Holbein and Hollar, seems necessarily to demand some investigation of its origin*.

* It would be a piece of injustice not to mention, that this has already been done in a very able manner by a respected friend of the compiler of the present essay, in a little work, intitled "Emblems of Mortality," ornamented with copies in wood of the Dance of Death, by J. Bewick, the brother of the admirable artist who executed the cuts to a history of quadrupeds, lately

In the dark ages of monkish bigotry and superstition, the deluded people, terrified into a belief that the fear of death was acceptable to the great Author of their existence, had placed one of their principal gratifications in contemplating it amidst ideas the most horrid and disgusting: hence the frequent descriptions of mortality in all its shapes amongst their writers,

published. The work was printed for T. Hodgson, Clerkenwell, in 1789, 12mo. The editor of it will immediately perceive that no rivalry is here intended; that in the pursuit of a subject of this nature many of the same authorities must have naturally presented themselves, and, in order to connect it properly, must again be of course adopted. Independently of these, the rest of this slight performance is only designed as supplemental.

and the representations of this kind in their books of religious offices, and the paintings and sculptures of their ecclesiastic buildings. They had altogether lost sight of the consolatory doctrines of the Gospel, which regard death in no terrific point of view whatever; a discovery reserved for the discernment of modern and enlightened Christians, who contemplate scenes which excited gloom and melancholy in the minds of their fore-fathers, with the gratification of philosophic curiosity. Some exceptions, however, to this remark are not wanting, for we may yet trace the imbecility of former ages in the decorations of many of our monuments, tricked out in all the filly ornaments of deaths heads and marrow-bones.

The most favourite subject of the kind however, was what is usually denominated the Dance of Death, or a representation of Death in the act of leading all ranks and conditions of men to the grave; with gesticulations not a little bordering upon the grotesque, though probably without any view to provoke the mirth of the spectator in those times. One of the most antient still existing, is that at Basil in Switzerland, in the church-yard formerly belonging to the Convent of Dominicans, which is said to have been painted at the instance of the fathers and prelates assisting at the grand council at Basil, in 1431, in memory of a plague which happened soon afterwards, and during its continuance. The name of the painter is

unknown, and will probably ever remain so, for no dependence can be had upon the vague conjectures of those, who, without any authority, or even the smallest probability, have attempted to ascertain it. To refute, or even to mention the blunders which have been committed by most of the travellers who have described the town of Basil, when they discuss this subject, would fill a volume: it will be sufficient to notice an assertion of Keyfler, that the painting was executed by Hans Bok, a celebrated painter of this place, who, however, from the testimony of Scheutzer, in his Itinerary, was not born till 1584. From some inscriptions on the spot it appears to have been retouched, or perhaps renewed,

in 1566 and 1616; the first time probably by Hans Klauber, whose name occurs in the lines addressed by Death to the Painter.

It has been frequently supposed that the Basil painting was the first of the kind, but this is extremely doubtful, from the knowledge we have of many others of apparently equal antiquity. Many of the bridges in Germany and Switzerland were ornamented in this manner, a specimen of which is still to be seen at Lucerne; and it is probable that almost every church of eminence was decorated with a Dance of Death. In the cloisters of St. Innocent's church at Paris, in those belonging to the old Cathedral of St. Paul at London, and in St. Mary's church

at Berlin, these paintings were to be seen. At Klingenthal, a convent in the Little Basil, are the remains of a Dance of Death, differently designed from that at the Dominicans, and thought to be more antient. The figures remaining till very lately in Hungerford's chapel, in the Cathedral at Salisbury, and known by the title of Death and the Young Man, were undoubtedly part of a Death's Dance, as might be further insisted on from the fragment of another compartment which was close to them. In the church at Hexham, in Northumberland, are the remains of a Death's Dance ; and at Fescamps, in Normandy, it is carved in stone, between the pillars of a church ; the figures are about eighteen inches high. Even fragments of painted glass,

whereon this subject has been depicted, with old English verses over the figures, may contribute to shew how very common it has been in our own country. P. C. Hilscher, in a tract printed at Dresden, in 1705, has taken notice of other Dances of Death at Dresden, Annaberg, Leipzig, and Berne. Dr. Nugent has described one in St. Mary's church at Lubeck, which he states to have been painted in 1463.

The origin of all these is perhaps to be sought for in an antient pageant, or religious farce, invented by the clergy, for the purpose of at once amusing and keeping the people in ignorance. In this all ranks and conditions of life were personated and mixed together in

a general dance, in the course of which every one in his turn vanished from the scene, to shew that none were exempted from the stroke of death. This dance was performed in the churches, and can be traced back as far as the year 1424;* it was called the Dance of Macaber, from a German poet of that name, who first composed some verses under the same title. Of this person very little is known, but Fabricius thinks the poem more antient than the paintings.† His work has been translated into Latin and French, in the last of which languages there are some very antient and very modern editions.

* Glossar. Carpentier, Tom. II. 1103.

† Bibl. med. & infim. Ætat.

The earliest allusion to the subject, but whether to the above-mentioned farce or to the paintings seems uncertain, is in the following lines, from the visions of Pierce the plowman, who wrote about 1350.

Death came drivyng after, and all to dust pashed
 Kynges and kayfers, knightes and popes
 Learned and lewde, he ne let no man stande
 That he hitte even, he never stode after.
 Many a lovely ladie, and lemmans of knights
 Swonned and swelted, for sorow of deathes dyntes.

When the arts of printing and engraving became established, various copies of the Dance of Macaber made their appearance, particularly in the Hours, Breviaries, Missals, and other service books of the church, few of

which were unaccompanied with a Dance of Death; and in these the designs sometimes varied. Many of our own service books for the use of Salisbury were thus decorated, and the fashion at length terminated in a book of Christian prayers, printed more than once during the reign of Elizabeth, since which time nothing of the kind has appeared. In all these are to be found the same dull and uniform representation of Death leading a single figure, without much attempt at character or execution, until at length there appeared, in 1538, a book, intitled "*Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort, autant elegamment pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginees.*" It was printed at Lyons by Melchior and Gaspar Trechsel, and is accom-

panied with forty-one of the most beautiful groupes of figures that can be well conceived, both for their composition and execution, being most delicately cut on wood, and surpassing in this branch of art almost every thing of the kind that has appeared before or since. This work was often republished, as well in the French, as in the Latin and Italian languages,* and has been usually deno-

* The following is presumed to be a tolerably correct list of the various editions of this book:

“Simulachres & historiees faces de la mort, &c.”
Lugd. 1538. 4to.

“Imagines de morte.” Lugd. 1542. 12mo.

“Imagines mortis.” Lugd. 1545. 12mo.

“Imagines mortis.” Lugd. 1547. 12mo.

“Les images de la mort.” Lyon 1547. 12mo.

“Simolachri, historie, e figure de la morte.” Lyone

minated, by most of the writers upon the arts of painting and engraving, as well as by many travellers, *Holbein's Dance of Death*. It is

1549. 12mo. with an address from the printer, in which he complains of some attempts having been made in other countries to imitate the cuts to his book, and informs the reader, that he had caused many more cuts to be added to this edition than had appeared in any other; a declaration not a little extraordinary, for both the editions of 1547, which were also published by this person, have the same number of cuts, and contain twelve more than the three first editions. These additional cuts were probably executed from the unfinished designs spoken of in the dedication to the first edition. Four of them, being groupes of children playing, are rather foreign to the subject, but are evidently done by the same artist who executed the others.

“*Icones mortis.*” Basil, 1554. 12mo.

extremely clear, however, that Holbein did not *invent* these subjects, for it appears in a dedication, which is only to be found in the first edition of this work, that the Painter was then dead, and that he had not lived to finish some of the designs, which, however, afterwards appeared in a subsequent edition. The Painter must therefore have died before 1538, and it is well known that Holbein was at

“ Les images de la mort, auxquelles sont adjoustees dix sept figures.” Lyon, 1562. 12mo. There are but five additional figures to this edition, the other twelve being what had already appeared, making in the whole seventeen more than in the first edition. Of these five cuts, which have all the delicacy of the others, three are groupes of boys.

“ De doot vermaskert, &c.” Antwerp, 1654.
12mo.

this time living, and continued so until 1555. Unluckily no evidence whatever, nor even tradition, has been preserved relating to this great artist, and it is to be feared that he will ever remain undiscovered.

After what has been said it becomes necessary to attempt at least to give some reason for the almost universal opinion, that these designs were the offspring of Holbein's pencil. Most of those writers who have described the town of Basil, as well as the compilers of the lives of the Painters, speak of a Dance of Death by Holbein, some referring to the old Dance of Macaber, and others to the more modern one; but it is not difficult to see that they have but transcribed from

each other, without taking any pains to examine the subject. Certain it is, however, that Holbein did paint a Death's Dance in its improved state, and likewise more than once. Bishop Burnet, in his travels in Switzerland, speaks of a Dance of Death, painted by Holbein, "on the walls of a house where he "used to drink," which was then so worn out that very little was to be seen except shapes and postures. He then mentions the old Death's Dance at the Dominicans convent*, which he says was "so worn out some time "ago, that they ordered the best painter they "had to lay new colours on it; but this is so "ill done, that one had rather see the dead

* By mistake called the Convent of the Augustinians.

“ shadows of Holbein’s pencil, (i. e. on the
“ walls of the house,) than this coarse work.”

This account is corroborated by Keyfler, who adds, that the painting on the house was then *entirely* obliterated. Patin, in his travels, also speaks of a house at Basil, curiously painted by Holbein, but does not mention the subject; it was probably the same as Burnet saw. These are the only travellers who have spoken upon this subject with any degree of accuracy, and fortunately their testimony throws much light upon it.

To the book already mentioned to have been published by the Trechfels, at Lyons, they sometimes annexed another, which was

in some degree connected with it, and appears to have been printed by them the following year. This was entitled, "*Historiarum veteris testamenti icones*," the cuts of which are in some instances much inferior to the others, and apparently by a different artist. The designs of these are indisputably by Holbein, as appears from some verses before the book, composed by Nicolas Bourbon, a cotemporary poet, who also wrote some lines upon a Dance of Death, painted by Holbein*. To these cuts to the Bible, are prefixed the first four which occur in the Dance of Death, as they likewise belong to the subject, and represent the creation and fall of man; but they are

* Borbonii Nugarum libri octo. Basil 1540. 12mo. p.

different in size, and were added, not only from the analogy of the subjects, but from the circumstance of their being already in the hands of the printer; and thus, from an odd coincidence of things, as well as a palpable confusion of the respective verses of Bourbon, seems to have originated an opinion that Holbein *invented* the Dance of Death.

But it has not only been asserted that Holbein designed, but that he *engraved*, or rather *cut* this Dance of Death on wood. That he practised this art, nay that he excelled in it, there is reason to believe, from some specimens that have been preserved, and which bear on them the unequivocal marks

of H. H. & HANS. HOLBEN*. A set of cuts with the latter mark occurs in Archbishop Cranmer's Catechism, printed by Walter Lyne in 1548; and although the composition of these is extremely good, their execution is not only inferior to the Dance of Death, but entirely different in its manner: and the mark of **HB** which is to be seen upon one of the cuts in this latter work, has been ascribed without any authority to Holbein, upon the strength of the vague opini-

* It is not however impossible that Holbein, in putting his mark upon these cuts, might only intend to shew that he designed them, or drew the subject upon the blocks.

ons concerning his interference with the Dance of Death*.

The great popularity and success of these cuts very soon excited many imitations of them both in copper and on blocks. In 1541 Aldegrever engraved eight of them, but with very material alterations. Other editions of the *Imagines Mortis*, which had been first published under that title in 1545, appeared in 1555, 1566, 1573, and probably at many other times; these were also

* This mark is also given by Professor Christ, in his *Dictionnaire des Monogrammes* to Hans Lautensack, and Hans Lederer, persons of whom absolutely nothing is known.

accompanied with cuts in wood by a very eminent but unknown artist, whose mark is *A*. This mark is also to be found in some of the emblems of Sambucus and Lejeune, in some initial letters to Grafton's Chronicle, and in other cuts executed during the sixteenth century*. It

* The inaccurate Papillon, who in matters of historical discussion is hardly ever to be trusted, has asserted in his "*Traité de la gravure en bois*," that this is the mark of Silvius Antonianus, or Antoniano. Having found it upon some cuts, in an edition of Faerno's fables, printed at Antwerp in 1567, with a dedication to Cardinal Borromeo, by Silvius Antoriano, he instantly conceived that he had discovered the name of the artist in that of the author of the dedication. The fact is that Antoniano was no engraver, but a professor of belles lettres at Rome, afterwards secretary to Pope Pius V. and at length a Cardinal. His

is not a little remarkable, that so late as the year 1654 there appeared a Dutch book, printed at Antwerp, where this artist

dedication had already appeared in the first edition of these fables in 1564, which has a different set of cuts engraved on copper. Another of Papillon's blunders is equally curious. He had seen an edition of the emblems of Sambucus with cuts, on which the same mark occurs.

In this book is a fine portrait of the author, with his dog, under whom is the word BOMBO, which Papillon gravely informs us is the name of the engraver, and again refers to it on another cut of one of the emblems under a dog also. Had he read the verses belonging to this particular emblem, he would have immediately seen that it was nothing more than the *dog's* name, as Sambucus himself declares, whilst he pays a laudable tribute to the attachment of the faithful companion of his travels.

worked, entitled, "Doodt vermaskert, or "Death masked," accompanied with eighteen cuts of the Dance of Death, which in the title page are ascribed to Holbein. They are all, except three, impressions from the identical blocks of the beautiful and original cuts of this subject; but the above-mentioned artist has had the effrontery to put his mark, together with the figure of a graving tool or knife, upon several of them. It is however possible that he might have repaired them, as some of the smaller lines, which in former impressions seem to have been injured, are here much stronger.

It might be tedious to describe *all the imitations* of the Dance of Death which have

appeared at different times, as they are exceedingly numerous ; but it would be unpardonable not to notice an alphabet of initial letters with this subject, which for humour and excellence of design, are even superior to the celebrated one ; and with respect to execution, especially when their minuteness is considered, being less than an inch square, absolutely wonderful. Their composition is entirely different from that of any of the others, and one of them is extremely indecent. They appear to have been done at Basil ; for in the public library there is preserved a *sheet*, whereon are printed three alphabets, viz. the one above mentioned, another of boys at play, and the third a dance of peasants, &c. The designs of some of

the last are the same as those in a similar Dance by Holbein, formerly painted on a house at Basil, and of which some drawings are still preserved; and it is therefore not improbable that he also designed the Dance of Death for these initials. They have apparently been struck off as proofs or patterns for some bookseller*, and at the bottom of the sheet is the mark **HL** with the words "Hans
" Lützelburger Formschneider, (i. e. block-
" cutter,) in Basel." In this manner has

* They were actually used by Cratander, a printer at Basil; and other initial letters, with Dances of Death, are to be seen in books printed at Zurich, Strasburg, and Vienna, in the sixteenth century. All the alphabets are in the possession of the compiler of this essay, but they have not the monogram.

been preserved the name of a most exquisite artist, whom, from the similarity of stile and subject, there is every reason to suppose the person who executed the fine cuts of the first Dance of Death. As he worked after the designs of Holbein, it is also probable that the painter might have invented *some* of the seventeen subjects which appeared in continuation of the original work, and that Lützelburger also cut them for the subsequent editions. From the extreme delicacy with which the initials with the Dance of Death are executed, there is reason to suppose that they were not cut upon blocks of wood, but of metal, as was probably the larger work of the same subject; and in support of this conjecture it may be observed, that blocks of this

kind are still preserved in the cabinets of the curious.

In 1780 Chretien de Mechel, a well-known artist and printseller at Basil, published forty-five engravings of a Death's Dance, as part of the works of Holbein, of which he intends to give a series. Mr. Coxe, in his travels, has given some account of this work, and informs us that they are done after some small drawings by Holbein, sketched with a pen, and slightly shaded with Indian ink; that these drawings were purchased by Mr. Fleischman, of Strasburg, at Crozat's sale at Paris, and are now in the collection of Prince Gallitzin, Minister from the Empress of Russia to the court of Vienna, at which

last place he had frequent opportunities of seeing and admiring them. He further adds that Hollar copied these drawings, an opinion which will admit of some doubt. Mons. De Mechel's remark, that from the dresses and character of several of the figures, it is probable the drawings were sketched in England, as well as Mr. Coxe's conjecture that they were in the Arundelian collection, will appear but slightly founded to any one conversant in the dresses of the French and German nations at that period, to which they bear at least an equal resemblance: again, one of the cuts represents a King sitting at table under a canopy, powdered with Fleurs de lis, whose figure has a remarkable affinity to the portraits of Francis I. If these drawings were copied

from the celebrated wooden cuts, they must have been done after the year 1547, as eight of them did not appear till that time.

But it has entirely escaped the knowledge of all the biographers of Holbein that he painted a Dance of Death in fresco, upon the walls of the Palace at Whitehall, which was consumed by fire in 1697. This curious fact is ascertained from two sets of nineteen very indifferent etchings from the wooden cuts, by one Nieuhoff; they were never published, but copies of them presented to the artist's friends, with manuscript dedications in the Dutch language, in which he speaks of the above-mentioned paintings at Whitehall. The book has the following

title engraved in a border, “ Imagines mor-
“ tis, or the Dead Dance of Hans Holbeyn,
“ Painter of King Henry the VIIIth.” The
author, in one of these dedications, addressed
to the Right Honourable William Benting, in-
forms him, that “ he had met with the scarce
“ little work of H. Holbeyn in wood, which
“ he had himself painted as large as life in fref-
“ co, on the walls of Whitehall; that he had
“ followed the original as nearly as possible, and
“ had presumed to lay his copy before him as
“ being born in the same palace; that he con-
“ sidered the partiality which every one has for
“ the place of his nativity, and that therefore
“ any account of what was curious and re-
“ markable therein, and of what was then no
“ more, as being destroyed by a fatal fire, must

“ of course prove acceptable, particularly as
“ there were hardly any more remains of the
“ palace left than his own dwelling.” He then
states, that the design of the painter resembled
that of the founder of the Greek monarchy,
who ordered these words to be written, to
remind him of his mortality, “ Remember,
Philip, that thou art a man,” and proceeds to
describe in a very quaint manner the different
subjects of his work. The dedication to the
other copy is nearly in similar words, and
addressed to Mynheer Heymans, who appears
in consideration of his singular merits to
have had a dwelling assigned him in the Palace
at Whitehall. From the handwriting and Dutch
names in this work, it is evidently of the
time of William III. but

of the artist no memorial is preserved ; however, the importance of the fact which he has recorded, will render him a valuable personage in the opinion of the lovers of the arts.

After what has been said then, it is to be hoped that no additional evidence will be requisite to shew that Holbein did not invent the subjects, nor execute the cuts belonging to the Dance of Death which is usually ascribed to him ; that he painted it however, and most assuredly more than once, seems to be beyond the possibility of doubt.

It only remains to give some account of the prints which are the immediate object of

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this publication, and to which it is hoped the preceding introduction will not have appeared uninteresting. It has been commonly supposed that Hollar copied these prints from the original cuts, but Mr. Coxe * thinks he followed the drawings engraved by De Mechel, which he imagines to have been in the Arundelian collection. Both these opinions seem erroneous; for many of Hollar's prints are materially different, as well from the cuts, as the drawings; and are, with two or three exceptions, very close copies of the cuts already mentioned to have been first published in 1555, with the mark of A.†

* Travels in Swisserland.

† It is not a little remarkable that almost the same variations from the original cuts, are to be found in

He must therefore have either had before him both the sets of wooden cuts, or have copied the paintings at Whitehall; for his acknowledged fidelity would have hardly suffered him to depart from his originals, whatever they were, and as they now remain, they are not correct copies of any single existing model.

Hollar's prints were first published in 1651*, with borders designed by Abraham à those of the edition of 1555, in De Mechel's prints, and in Hollar's etchings; a circumstance which renders it probable that these last were all copied from the same originals, which might have been the work of Holbein, to whom the variations may be likewise attributed.

* In 1682 there appeared engraved copies of the Dance of Death, in a work entitled "Theatrum mor-

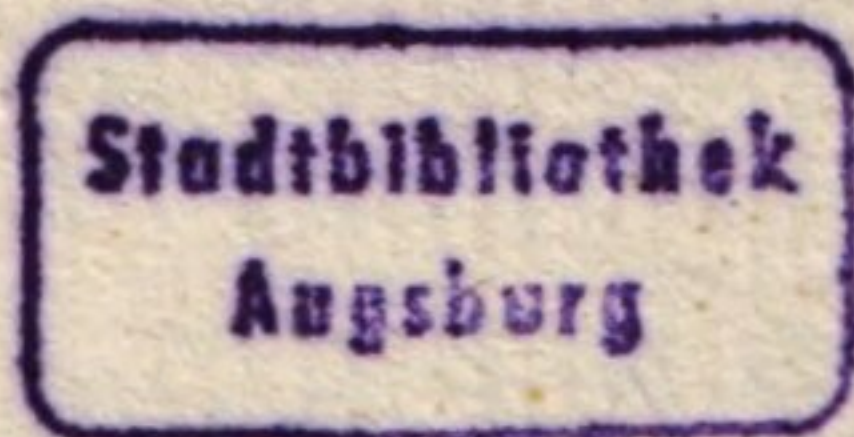
Diepenbeke, and afterwards without the borders. In this latter impression the letters *HB.* *i.* occur upon every print, and are intended for “Holbein invenit,” as appears from some other of Hollar’s prints, which have upon them these words at length. No panegyric is here wanting upon the works of this admirable artist; they are sufficiently known and esteemed by every collector of taste, and particularly his Dance of Death. The plates, which appear to have been but little used, have been till lately preserved in a noble family, and impressions from them are

“*tis humanæ*,” by J. Weichard. These engravings are within borders of fruit, flowers, and animals, which are executed with an uncommon degree of elegance.

once more presented to the public, without the least alteration.

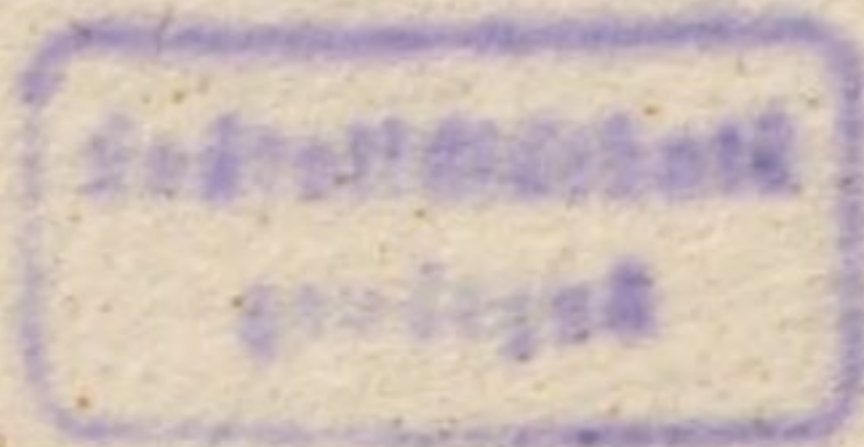
Vertue, in his description of Hollar's works, mentions that he engraved a reverse of the first print, an additional one without a border, representing the rich man disregarding the prayers of the poor, and three others from the *set after Holbein*, with four Latin verses at bottom. He also engraved the six first letters of the alphabet, adorned with small figures of a Death's Dance, and one large plate of the same subject for Dugdale's *St. Paul's*, and the *Monasticon*; but this last plate is only a copy from an old wooden cut prefixed to Lydgate's *Dance of Macaber*, at the end of his *fall of princes*, printed by

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Tottell in 1554, and was not intended to represent the Dance of Death at St. Paul's, as Mr. Warton has supposed*, but only as an emblematical frontispiece to the verses.

† Observ. on Spenser, Vol. II. 117.



DESCRIPTIONS

OF THE

CUTS

IN

HOLLAR'S DANCE

OF

DEATH.



MORTALIVM NOBILITAS
Memorare nouissima & in æternum non
peccabis. Eccl. 7

FRONTISPIECE.

I.

IT has been supposed by Papillon, without the least authority, or even probability, that the two figures represent the persons for whom Holbein painted this work. It has been already shewn that Holbein did not design this plate. It is altogether emblematical, and appears to be an heraldical representation of mortality, viz. a tattered shield, surmounted with a death's head; the crest, an hour-glass between two arms of a skeleton, holding part of a skull. The two figures are probably intended for supporters,

and represent the drefs of the Swifs Nobility of the fixteenth century. The “MOR-
“TALIVM NOBILITAS” was added by Hollar, and is a very concife and admirable explanation of the fubject.



Quia, audisti vocem vxoris tue, & comedisti
de ligno, ex quo praeceperam tibi ne comede-
res Gen. 3.

THE TEMPTATION.

II.

ADAM and Eve in Paradise. Eve, seduced by the serpent, who in this and most other antient representations of the subject is depicted with a human face, appears to have just tasted of the forbidden fruit, which she holds up to Adam, and prevails on him to gather another apple from the tree. In representing this subject, it is very seldom that artists have been correct.

THE EXPULSION FROM PARADISE.

III.

ADAM and Eve driven by the angel from Paradise, are preceded by Death, who is playing on a violin, and rejoicing at this introduction to his dance. The artist from whom Hollar copied, not comprehending the instrument of music in the original cut, which is the antient cymbal or hurdy-gurdy, has improperly converted it into a very awkward violin.



Emisit eum Dominus Deus de paradiso voluptatis, ut operaretur terram, de qua sumptus est. Gen. 3.



Maledicta Terra in opere tuo, in laboribus comedes
cunctis diebus vite tuae, donec reuerteris. 4o Gen 3.

THE FULFILLING OF THE CURSE.

IV.

ADAM tilling the earth, assisted by Death. In the back ground is Eve, suckling her first born son, and holding at the same time a distaff. From this manner of treating the subject by the old painters, seems to have originated the saying,

When Adam delv'd and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?

It is also to be found in many other languages.

THE POPE.

V.

A N Emperor kneels before the Pope, who is about to place a crown upon his head. A Death behind, leans with one hand upon the Pope's chair, with the other upon a crutch. The ceremony is attended by Cardinals and Bishops: one of the former is ludicrously personated by another Death. The variations in this cut from the original are very considerable, and two grotesque Devils are entirely omitted.



Moriatur Sacerdos magnus. *Iosue. 20.*
Et Episcopatum eius accipiat alter, *Psal. 108.*



Al.

W.

Dispone domui tuæ, morieris enim tu, &
 non viues, *Isai. 38.* — *Ibi morieris.*
 & ibi erit cirtus gloriæ tuæ, *Isai. 22.*

THE EMPEROR.

VI.

THE painter's meaning here is not extremely clear. The Emperor seated on his throne seems to be administering justice between a rich and a poor man. He holds in his hand the Curtana, or sword of mercy. Death stands behind him, and appears to be plucking off his crown.

THE EMPRESS.

VII.

THE Empress, decked with all the pomp of majesty, and attended by her maids of honour, is overtaken by Death, who, in the character of a shrivel'd old woman, points to a grave, and seems to say, "to this must
"you come at last."



Gradiētes in superbia potest DEVS
humiliare Dan: 4



Mulieres opulenta surgite, & audite Vocem meam:
Post dies & Annum & vos conturbabunt,
Isai: 32.

THE QUEEN.

VIII.

She is walking out from her palace, accompanied by two of her ladies and her jester. Death, having previously despoiled the motley personage of his habiliments, and grotesquely decorated himself therewith, is forcibly dragging away the Queen. The fool attempts ineffectually to protect her, whilst the female attendants join in the lamentations of their mistress.

THE CARDINAL.

IX.

HE is disposing of his indulgences to a rich offender, who brings with him a chest of money. Death snatches off the Cardinal's hat.



Vae qui iustificatis Impium pro muneribus,
& Iustitiam Iusti auferitis ab eo. Ier. 5



Princeps induetur mœrore. Et quiesce-
re faciam superbiam potentium, Ezech: 7.

THE DUKE.

X.

HE is seen just coming out of his palace, accompanied with his retinue. A poor beggar with her child craving charity of him is rejected, whilst Death is supposed invisibly to lay his hands upon him.

THE BISHOP.

XI.

DEATH leading off the principal shepherd, the rest terrified betake themselves to flight, and the flocks are dispersed. The setting sun is very judiciously introduced upon this occasion.



Percutiam Pastorem, & dispergen-
tur oves gregis. Matt. 26. Mar. 14.



Quoniam cum interierit, non sumet
secum omnia, neque cum eo descendet
gloria eius. Psal. 68.

THE NOBLEMAN.

XII.

DEATH, in the character of a ragged and oppressed peasant, has despoiled the nobleman of his paraphernalia, and is dashing his shield or coat of arms to pieces. On the ground lie scattered a helmet, crest, and flail.

THE ABBOT.

XIII.

DEATH, in a very ludicrous attitude, with the Abbot's mitre on his head, and his crozier on his shoulder, has seized him by the cloak, whilst the other endeavours to disengage himself, and appears to be throwing his breviary at his assailant. If Hollar copied the original wooden cut of this subject, he has very much deviated from the admirable character of the fat and pampered Abbot.



Ipse morietur, quia non habuit disci-
plinam, & in multitudinis stultitiæ suæ
decipietur, Proverb. 5.



Laudavi magis mortuos. quam viuentes
Eccle: 4

THE ABBESS.

XIV.

DEATH, fantastically dressed in a sort of mantle, with feathers on his head, exultingly seizes the Abbess by the wimple, and leads her away from the convent; whilst a nun in the back ground is piteously bewailing the fate of her mistress.

THE FRIAR.

XV.

THIS poor mendicant is endeavouring to escape with his wallet and money-box from the clutches of Death, who has seized him by the cowl, and drags him away with great violence.



*Sedentes in tenebris & in Vmbra
Mortis Vincos in mendicitate. Psal. 106*



Est via, quæ videtur hominī iusta: novissi-
ma autem eius deducunt hominē ad mortem.
Prov. 16.

THE NUN.

XVI.

HERE is a mixture of gallantry and devotion. A young lady who has precipitately taken the veil, seems to have admitted her lover into her apartment. She is kneeling before an altar, and hesitates whether to persist in her devotions, or listen to the amorous ditties of the youth, who, seated on a bed, accompanies them on a Theorbo lute. Death extinguishes the candles on the altar; the painter hereby intimating the punishment which awaits on criminal love.

THE PREACHER.

XVII.

FROM the motto to this print, the painter seems to have designed the representation of an hypocritical preacher. Death behind, with a stole round his neck, is lying in wait for him, and holds in his hand what is not very distinguishable in Hollar's print; in the original it is evidently a jaw-bone.



Va qui dicitis malum bonum, & bonum malum.
ponentes tenebras lucem, & lucem tenebras: ponen-
tes amarum in dulce, & dulce in amarum. *Isai. 5.*



Medice, cura te ipsum . Luc. 4.

THE PHYSICIAN.

XVIII.

DEATH is introducing an aged patient, whose water he carries in an urinal, and exhibits to the physician, whom he is supposed to address emphatically in these words, "physician, heal thyself; thy patient is already ready consigned to me."

THE SOLDIER.

XIX.

THIS hero, after vanquishing his enemies and escaping the perils of war, meets at length with a foe whom he resists in vain. At a distance another Death appears, beating a drum, and leading on a company of soldiers to battle. In the original cut, Death is more characteristically armed with a thigh-bone, instead of a dart.



Cum fortis armatus custodit alium, sumit, etc.
Si autem fortior eo superueniens vicerit eum, unus
versus eius arma aufert, in quibus confidebat. Luc. 11.



Callicles vidit malum, & abscondit se: im-
 pens pertransiit, & afflictus est damno, Thoui 22

THE ADVOCATE.

XX.

THE rich client is seen putting a bribe into the hands of this dishonest lawyer, to which Death also contributes, but reminds him at the same time that his glass is run out. To this admonition he seems to pay little regard, being altogether occupied in counting the money. Behind this groupe stands the poor suitor, wringing his hands, and lamenting that his poverty disables him from coping with his powerful adversary.

THE NEW MARRIED COUPLE.

XXI.

THE happy couple, whom the church has just united, are admonished by the beat of Death's drum, that they will probably undergo a speedy separation. The lady seems to be a good deal affected with the odd gesticulations of this unwelcome monitor, whilst the husband endeavours to console her.



Me & te sola Mors separabit, Ruth. 2.



Ducunt in bonis dies suos, & in
puncto ad inferna descendunt. Job. 2

THE YOUNG MAIDEN.

XXII.

THE lady is exhibited in her dressing-room with her maid, who is bringing her a splendid robe, with a chain necklace of gold. Upon a chest are seen a looking-glass, a sponge, a brush, and a box of paint. Death behind, ornaments the girl with a necklace of bones.

THE MERCHANT.

XXIII.

AFTER having escaped the perils of the sea and happily reached the wished-for shore, with his bales of merchandize, this too secure adventurer, whilst contemplating his riches, is surprized by his unwelcome visitor. The rest of his companions betake themselves to flight.



Qui congregat thesauros lingua men-
daci, vanus & excors est, & impingetur
ad laqueos Mortis. Proverbi 21.



Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis &
onerati estis. Matt. 11

THE PEDLAR.

XXIV.

ACCOMPANIED by his faithful dog, and heavily laden with goods, the poor man is arrested in his progress by the hands of Death, who undertakes to ease him of his burthen. It is in vain that he points to the place of his destination ; he is forcibly compelled to change his route. Another Death leads off this dance with a jig upon the trummarine.

THE MISER.

XXV.

DEATH has penetrated into the strong hold of the miser, and seated on a stool, deliberately collects into a large dish the money which he had been counting, whilst the miser, in an agony of terror and despair, is wringing his hands, and vainly imploring mercy.



Stulte, hac nocte repetunt anima
tuam & quæ parasti cuius erunt,



Corruit in curru suo, Chron. 22.

THE WAGGONER.

XXVI.

THE carriage is overturned, and one of the horses thrown down. A figure of Death is carrying off a wheel which he has just torn away, whilst another appears to be staving a cask of wine*. The terrified waggoner is uttering loud lamentations at this unlooked for misfortune; the whole forming one of the most excellent groupes in the series.

* In the dedication to the first edition of the genuine wooden cuts, it is said that this figure is lickerously sucking out the wine through a reed; but this appears to be a mistake, as it is rather untwisting one of the staves which secure the cask.

THE GAMESTERS.

XXVII.

THREE persons at a gaming table are interrupted in their sport by Death and the Devil, between whom a contest arises for the possession of one of the party. Death has seized him by the throat, whilst his antagonist as violently drags him by the hair of his head. Another of the gamblers seems to intercede for his companion, whilst the third scrapes together all the money on the table,



Quid prodest homini, si universum Man-
dum lucretur, animæ autem suæ detrimen-
tum patiatur, Matth. 16,



Spiritus meus attenuabitur, dies mei breuiabuntur, & solum mihi superest sepulchrum. Job 17

THE VERY OLD MAN.

XXVIII.

THIS is a beautiful emblem of man's second infancy. The helpless creature bowed down with age, appears to listen with delight to the music of a dulcimer, with which Death beguiles him, and even wishes to handle it. His conductor insidiously leads him to the grave.

THE AGED WOMAN.

XXIX.

THE tedious pace of this old woman, who is more occupied with a rosary composed of bones than with the music of a Death who precedes her, playing on the wooden psalter or dulcimer, is discovered in the impatience of another Death, who presses her forward with blows.



Melior est Mors quam Vita. Ecclesi. 30.



Homo natus de muliere, breui vivens tem-
pore, repletur multis miserijs: qui quasi flos
egreditur & conteritur, & fugit velut umbra. Job 1

THE INFANT.

XXX.

WHILST the poor widow is preparing food for her children in her miserable cottage, Death enters and carries off her youngest child, leaving her with the other to bewail his untimely fate.

THE
DANCE
OF
MACABER.

THE

DANCE

OF

MASCARADE

THE
D A N C E
O F
M A C A B E R.

JOHN LYDGATE, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Bury in Suffolk, flourished in the reign of Henry VI. He was an uncommon ornament of his profession, his genius being so lively, and his accomplishments so numerous, that it is hardly probable the holy father St. Benedict would have acknowledged him for a genuine disciple. After a short education at Oxford, he travelled into France and Italy, and returned a complete master of

the language and the literature of both countries. He chiefly studied the Italian and French poets, particularly Dante, Boccaccio, and Alain Chartier; and became so distinguished a proficient in polite learning, that he opened a school in his monastery for teaching the sons of the nobility the arts of versification, and the elegancies of composition. Yet although philology was his object, he was not unfamiliar with the fashionable philosophy; he was not only a poet and a rhetorician, but a geometrician, an astronomer, a theologist, and a disputant. He made considerable addition to those amplifications of our language, in which Chaucer, Gower, and Occleve led the way, and is the first of our writers whose style is cloathed with that

perspicuity in which the English phraseology appears at this day to an English reader. His muse was of universal access, and he was not only the poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his Majesty at Eltham, a may-game for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the Lord Mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation, for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for the coronation, Lydgate was consulted, and gave the poetry.

Mr. Warton, from whose elegant history of English poetry the above account of Lydgate is extracted, further informs us, that he

translated Macaber's Dance of Death from the French, *at the request of the chapter of Saint Paul's*, to be inscribed under the painting of that subject in their cloister ; but it appears from the verses themselves, that he undertook the translation at the instance of a French clerk. Lydgate's poem is neither a literal or complete translation of the French version from Macaber ;* and this he himself confesses,

“ Out of the French I drough it of intent

“ Not word by word but following in substance.”

* This French translation has been erroneously given to Michel Marot, who was not born at the time when it was first printed. See De Bure Bibliog. instruct. No. 3109, and Warton's Correct. and Add. to Vol. II. of Hist. of Engl. Poetry.

Again, the number of the characters in Lydgate is much less than in the French, being only thirty-five, whilst the other contains seventy-six, and he has not only omitted several, but supplied their places with others; so that if these lines were inscribed under the painting at Saint Paul's, it must have differed materially from that at Saint Innocent's at Paris. Stowe, upon whose sole authority all the information concerning this painting depends, says, that on the north side of Saint Paul's church was a great cloister, invironing a plot of ground, of old time called Pardon church-yard, whereof Thomas More, Dean of Saint Paul's, was either the first builder, or a great benefactor, and was buried there. About this cloister

was artificially and richly painted the Dance of Machabray, a Dance of Death commonly called the Dance of Paul's; *the like whereof was painted about St. Innocent's cloister at Paris*; the metres or poetry of this Dance were translated out of French into English, by John Lydgate, Monk of Bury. He adds, that this was done at the expence of Jenken Carpenter* in the reign of Henry the VIth, so that the poem and the painting appear to have been finished about the same time.

In the year 1549, on the tenth of April, the whole of this cloister, together with the

* This Jenken Carpenter was town clerk of London, 1430, and executor of Richard Whittington. Weever's Funeral Monum. p. 379. 4to. edition.

Dance of Death, the tombs, and monuments, was begun to be pulled down by command of the Duke of Somersset, so that nothing thereof was left but the bare plot of ground, which was afterwards converted into a garden for the petty Canons*.

All the antient Dances of Death, though evidently to be deduced from one original, differed very materially in the number and design of the characters. They uniformly appear to have been accompanied with Macaber's Verses, or more probably with imitations of them.

* Stowe's Survey.





The

Daunce of Machabree :

Wherein

is lively expressed and shewed

THE STATE OF MANNE,

**And how he is called at uncertayne tymes by DEATH,
and when he thinketh least thereon :**

Made by DAN JOHN LYDGATE

Monke of S. Edmunds Bury.

THE
DANCE
OF
MACHABEE.

The Prologe.

O ye Folkes hard hearted as a Stone,
Which to the World have all your advertence,
Like as it should ever lasten in one,
Where is your Wit, where is your Providence?
To seen aforne the sodayn violence
Of cruel Death, that be so wise and sage,
Which slayeth, alas ! by stroke or pestilence,
Both young and old of low and high parage.

Death spareth nought, lowe ne high degree,
Popes, Kings, ne worthy Emperors,
When they shine most in felicity,
He can abate the freshnes of her flours.
Her bright Sun clipten with his shours
Make them plunge fro her sees lowe,
Dauger the might of all these Conquerours,
Fortune hath them from her whele ythrow.

Considereth this ye folkes that been wise,
And it imprinteth in your Memorial,
Like then sample which that at Parise,
I found depict ones in a Wall,
Full notably as I rehearse shall,
Of a French Clerke taking acquaintance,
I took on me to translaten all
Out of the French Machabrees Daunce.

By whose advise and counsaile at the last,
Through her stiering and her motion,
I obeyed unto her request,
Thereof to make a playn translacyon,
In English Tongue of entencion
That proud folkes that been stout and bolde,
As in a mirrour toforne in her reason
Her ugly fine there clearly may behold.

By ensample that thei in her entents,
Amend her life in every maner age,
The which daunce at Saint Innocents,
Portrayed is with all the Surplusage,
Poven unto us our lives to correct;
And to declare the fine of our passage,
Right anone my Stile I will direct
To shew this World is but a pilgrimage.

The Words of the Translator.

O Creatures ye that been reasonable,
The life desiring which is eternal,
Ye may seen here doctrine full notable
Your life to lead, which that is mortal,
Thereby to learn in special,
How ye shall trace the Daunce of Bachabree,
To man and woman ylike natural,
For death ne spareth high ne low degree.

In this myrrour every wight may finde,
That him behoveth to gone upon this daunce,
Who goeth to forne, or who shall go behind,
All dependeth on Goddes ordinance,
Wherefore lowly every man is chance,
Death spareth not poor, ne yet blood-royal;
Every man therefore have this in remembrance,
Of oo matter God hath yforged all.

Death first speaketh unto the Pope, and after to every
degree as followeth.

HE that been set most high in dignity,
Of all estates in earth spiritual,
And like as Peter hath the soveraintee
Over the church and states temporal,
Upon this daunce ye first begin shall,
As most worthy lord and governour,
For all the worship of your estate Papall,
And of Lordship to God is the honour.

The Pope maketh Answer.

Fyrst me behoveth this daunce for to lede,
Which sat in earth highest in my see,
The State full perillous who so taketh heed,
To occupy Peter's dignity,
But for all that Death I may not flee,
On this daunce with other for to trace,
For which all honour who prudently can see,
Is little worth that doth so soon passe.

Death speaketh to the Emperor.

Syr Emperour Lord of all the ground,
Sovereine Prince and highest of noblesse,
Ye mot forsake of gold your apple round,
Scepter and sword, and all your high prowesse,
Behind letten your treasour and your riches,
And with other to my daunce obey
Against my might is worth none hardinesse,
Adams children all they must deye.

The Emperor maketh Answer.

I note to whom that I may appeal
Touching death which doth me so constrain,
There is no gin to helpen my querel
But spade and pickoys my grave to attayne,
A simple sheet there is no more to seyn,
To wrappen in my body and visage,
Whereupon sore I me compleyne,
That great Lordes have little advantage.

Death speaketh to the Cardinal.

We been abashed it seemeth and in drede,
Syr Cardinal it sheweth by your chere,
But yet forthy ye follow shall in deed,
With other folke my daunce for to lere,
Your great aray all shall leaven here.
Your hat of red, your vesture of great cost,
All these thinges reckoned well in fear.
In great honour good advise is lost.

The Cardinal maketh Answer.

I have great cause, certes this is no faile,
To be abashed and greatly dread me
Sith death is come me sodainly to assaile
That I shall never hereafter clothed be,
In grise nor ermine like unto my degree,
Mine hat of red leuen eke in distresse,
By which I have learned well and see,
How that all joy endeth in heavinesse.

Death speaketh to the King.

O noble King, most worthy of renoune,
Come forth anon for all your worthines
That whilom had about you environ
Great royalty and passing hye noblesse:
But right anon all your great highnesse,
Sole from your men in haste ye shall it lete
Who most aboundeth here in great riches,
Shall bear with him but a shete.

The King maketh Answer.

I have nought learnd here toforne to dance,
No daunce insooth of footing so savage,
Where through I see by cleer demonstrance,
What Pride is worth or force of high linage,
Death all fordoth this is his usage,
Great and small that in this world sojourne,
Who is most meek I hold him most sage,
For we shall all to the dead ashes tourne.

Death speaketh to the Patriarch.

Sir Patriarche all your humble cheer,
He quiteth you nought nor your humility,
Your double cross of gold and stones cleer,
Your power whole, and all your dignity,
Some other shall of very equity
Possede anon as I rehearse can
Trusteth never that ye shall Hope be
For holy hope deceiveth many a man.

The Patriarch maketh Answer.

Worldly honour gret tresour and riches,
Have me deceived soothfastly indeed,
Mine old joyes been turned into tristesse,
What availeth such treasures to possede?
It climbeth up, a fall hath for its mede,
Great estates folke wasten out of number,
Who mounteh high it is sure, and no drede,
Great burthen doth him oft encumber.

Death speaketh to the Constable.

It is my right to arrest you and constreyne
With us to dance my master sir Constable,
For more stronger than ever was Charlemain
Death hath afforced and more worshipable.
For hardines ne knighthood this is no fable,
Nor strong armure of plates nother of maile,
What gayneth armes of folke most notable,
When cruel Death list him to assaile.

The Constable maketh Answer.

By purpose was and whole intention
To assail castles and mighty fortresses,
And bring folke unto subjection,
To seek honour, fame, and great riches,
But I see that all worldly proffesse
Death can abate which is a great despite,
To him alone sorrow and eke sweetnesse,
For against death is found no respite.

Death speaketh to the Archbishop.

Syr Archbishop, why do you withdraw,
So frowardly, as it were by disdain?
We must approach to my mortall law,
It to contrare it were nought but in vayne,
For day by day there is none other gayne,
Death at the hand, pursueth every coast,
Hrest and debte mot be yelde againe,
And at a day men counten with their host.

The Archbishop maketh Answer.

Allas I wote not to what party for to flee,
For dread of death I have so great distresse,
To escape his might I can no refute see,
That who so knew his constraint and duresse,
He would take reason to maistresse,
Aduer my treasour, my pompe, and pride also,
By painted chambers, my port and my freshnes,
Thing that behoveth nedes mot be do.

Death speaketh to the Baron.

Ye that among Lords and Barons,
Have had so long worship and renowne,
For yet your trumpets and your clarions,
This is no dreame nor simulation,
Whilom your custom and entencion,
Was with Ladies to daunsen in the shade,
But oft it happeth in conclusion
One man breaketh that another made.

The Baron maketh Answer.

Full oft sith I have been auctorised,
To high enprises and things of gret fame,
Of high and low my thank also devised,
Cherishd with Ladies and women high of name
He never one me was put to defame.
In Lords of Court which that was notable,
But Deaths stroke hath made me lame,
Under heaven in earth is nothing stable.

Death speaketh to the Princess.

C me forth anon my Lady good Princ els
We must also gon upon this daunce,
Nought may avayle your great straungeness
Neither your beauty nor your gret pleasance,
Your rich aray nother your dalliance,
That whilom couth so many hold in hond,
In love for all your double variance
We mot as now this footing understand.

The Princess maketh Answer.

Alas I see there is none other boot,
Death hath in earth no Lady nor Mastres,
And on this daunce yet mot I nedes fote,
For there nis Queen, Countess, ne Dutches,
Flouring in bounty, nor in her fayrness
That shooe of death mot passe the passage,
When our beauty and counterfeit fairness
Dieth, adue then our rimples age.

Death speaketh to the Bishop.

My Lord sir Bishop with Biter and Cross,
For all your riches soothly I ensure,
For all your treasure kept in crosse,
Your worldly goods and goods of nature,
Of your shep the dreadfull ghostly cure,
With charge committed to your prelacy,
For to accompt ye shall be brought to lure,
No wight is sure that climbeth over high.

The Bishop maketh Answer.

Mine heart truly is nother glad ne mery,
Of sodein tidinges which that ye bring,
My feast is turned into simple fery,
That for discomfort me list nothing syng,
The world contraries to me now in working,
That all folks can so disherit,
Ye all with halt (alas) at our parting,
All thing shall pass, save only our merit.

Death speaketh to the Squire.

Come forth sir Squire right fresh of your aray,
That con of daunces all the new guise,
If ye bate harness freshly horsed yesterday,
With spere and shield at your uncouth devise,
And took on you so many high emprise,
Daunleth with us it will no better be,
There is no succour in no maner wise,
For no man may fro Deaths stroke flee.

The Squire maketh Answer.

Sithence that death holdeth me in his lase,
Yet shall I speak oo word ere I passe,
Adue all mirth, adue now all solace,
Adue my Ladies whilom so fresh of face,
Adue beauty, pleasaunce, and all solace,
Of deaths chaunge every day is prime,
Think on your souls ere the death manace,
For all shall rot, and no man wot what time.

Death speaketh to the Abbot.

Come forth sir Abbot with your brode hat,
Beeth nought abasht, if ye haven right,
Great is your head, your belly large and fat,
Yet mot come daunce if ye be nothing light.
Leaveth your abbey to some other wight,
Your heyre is of age your state to occupie,
Who that is fattest I have him behight,
In his grave shall soonest putrifie.

The Abbot maketh Answer.

Of these threts have I none envie,
That I shall now leave all the governance,
But that I shall as a cloysterer dye,
This death is to me passing gret grievance,
By liberty nor my great habundaunce,
What may they availe in any maner wise,
Yet aske I mere with heartely repentance,
If in dying to late men them advise.

Death speaketh to the Abbess.

And ye my Lady gentle dame Abbess,
With your mantles furred large and wide,
Your veil your wimple passing of gret riches,
And bedes (sister) you mot not leyn on side,
For to this daunce I shall be your guide,
If ye be tender borne of gentle blood,
Whiles that you live for yourself provide,
For after death no man hath no good.

The Abbess maketh Answer.

Alas that death hath thus for me ordaind
That in no wise I may it nought decline,
If it be so, full oft I have constraind,
Brest and throte my notes out to twine,
By chekes round garnished for to shine,
Ungird full oft to walken at the large,
Thus cruel death with all estates fine,
Who hath no ship must row in bote or barge.

Death speaketh to the Bayly.

Come forth sir Bayly that know all guile,
By your office of trouth and rightwisenes,
We must come to a new assise,
Extortions and wrongs to redresse,
We be somned as law biddeth expresse,
To geve accompts the fudge will you charge,
Which hath ordained to excluden all falsnes,
That every man shall bear his own charge.

The Bayly maketh Answer.

O thou Lord God this is a hard journey,
To which aforne I took but little hede,
By chance is turned, and that forethinketh me,
Whilom with Judges what me list to spede,
Lay in my might by labour oft for mede,
But sith there is no rescus by battayle,
I hold him wise that couth well seen in d. de,
Again death that none apel may vayl.

Death speaketh to the Astronomer.

Come forth master that lookest up so high
With instruments of Astronomy.
To take the grees and height of every starre,
What may avayle all your astrology?
Sith of Adam all the genealogie,
Hade first of God to walk upon the ground,
Death with arest thus saith Theologie,
And all shall dye for an apple round.

The Astronomer maketh Answer.

For all my craft, cunning, or science,
I can nought find no provision,
Noth in the stars search out no difference,
By domifying or calculation.
Save finally in conclusion,
For to describe our cunning every dele,
There is no more by sentence of reason,
Who liveth aright mot nedes dye wele.

Death speaketh to the Burgis.

Syr Burgis what do you long tary,
For all your aboyry and your gret riches,
If ye be strong, deinous, and contrary,
Tolwards this daunce ye mot you nedes dress;
For of all your tresour, plenty, and largesse,
From other it came, and shall unto strangers,
He is a foole that in such business,
Mot nought for whom he stuffeth his garners.

The Burgis maketh Answer.

Certes to me it is great displeaunce,
To leave all this, and mai it nought assure,
How these rents, tresour and substance
Death all fordoth such is his nature;
Therefore wise is no creature,
That set his heart on good that may dissever,
The world it lent, the world will it recure,
And who most hath, lothest dyeth ever.

Death speaketh to the Canon Secular.

And ye sir Chanon with many gret Pre bend
Ye may no lenger have distribution,
Of Gold, Silver, largely to dispend,
For there is now no consolation,
But dance with us for all your high remembrance,
For if death stode upon the brinke,
Ye may thereof have no delation,
Death cometh ay when men least on him thinke.

The Chanon maketh Answer.

By benefice with many personage,
God wote ful lite may me now comfort,
Death hath of me so gret aduantage,
That all my riches may me nought disport,
Amisse of gris they will again resort,
Unto the world a surpleys and prebend,
All is vainglory truely to report,
To dyen well, each man should entend.

Death speaketh to the Marchant.

Ye rich Marchant ye mot look hitherward,
That passed have full many divers lond,
On horse and foot, having most regard
To lucre and winning as I understond;
But now to dance ye mot give me your hond,
For all your labour full little awayleth now,
A due vainglory both of free and bond,
None more covet than thei that have ynough.

The Marchant maketh Answer.

By many a hill, and many a strong vale
I have travailed with many marchandise,
Over the sea down carrie many a bale,
To sondry Isles more then I can devise.
Mine heart inward ay fretteth with covetise,
But all for nought now death doth me constrein,
For which I see by record of the wise,
Who all embraceth little shal constrein.

Death speaketh to the Chartreux.

Debe me your hond with cheke dead and pale,
Caused of watch and long abstinence,
Sir Chartreux and your self abaile,
Unto this daunce with humble patience.
To stribe ayein may be no resistance,
Lenger to live set nought your memory,
If I be lothsome as in appearance,
Above all men death hath the victory.

The Chartreux maketh Answer.

Unto the world I was dead long agon,
By mine order and my profession,
And every man be he never so strong,
Dreadeth to dye by kindly motion.
After his fleshly inclination,
But please to God my soul to borrow,
Fro friends might and fro damnation,
Some arne to day that shall nought be to morrow.

Death speaketh to the Sergeant.

Come forth sir Serjeant with your stately make,
Make no defence nor rebellion
It may nought avail to grutchen in this case,
If ye be deyners of condition,
For neither pele nor protection,
May you fraunchise to do nature wrong,
For there is none so sturdy champion,
If he be mighty, another is also strong.

The Sergeant maketh Answer.

How dare this death set on me arrest,
That am the Kings chosen officer,
Which yesterday both East and West,
Mine office did full surquedous of chere,
But now this day I am arrested here,
And can nought flee, if I had it sworne,
Every man is loth to dye both farre and nere
That hath nought learned for to be ded asorn.

Death speaketh to the Monke.

Sir Monke also with your black habite
Ye may no lenger hold here sojoure,
There is nothing that may you here respite,
Agein my might you for to do succour.
Ye mot accompt touching your labour,
How ye have spend it in dede word and thought,
To earth and ashes turneth every floure,
The life of man is but a thing of nought.

The Monke maketh Answer.

I had leaver in the cloyster be
At my booke and study my service,
Which is a place contemplatif to see,
But I have spent my life in many wise,
Like as a foole dissolute and nice,
God of his mercy grant me repentance,
By chere outward hard is to devise,
All be not merry which that men see daunce.

Death speaketh to the Usurer.

Thou Usurer looke up and behold,
Unto thy winning thou settest ay thy paine
Whose covetise never waxeth cold,
Thy greedy thrust so sore doth the constrein.
But thou shalt never to thy desyre attaine,
Such an Etick thy heart fretten shall,
But that of pity God his honde refraine
One perilous stroke will make thee losen all.

The Usurer maketh Answer.

Now behoveth sodeinly to dye,
Which is to me great paine and eke grevance
Succour to fynde I see no maner way,
Of Gold nor Silver by none chevissance.
Death through his hast abideth no purveiance
Of folkes blinde, that can nought loke well,
Full oft happeth by kinde of fatall chaunce,
Some have fayre eyes that see never adell.

The Poor Man borroweth of the Usurer.

Usurer to God is full great offence,
And in his sight a great abusion,
The poor borroweth percase for indigence,
The rich lent by false collusion.
Onely for lucre in his intention,
Death shall both to accompts fet,
To make reckoning by computation,
No, no man is quit that is behind of dette.

Death speaketh to the Physitian.

Master of Physike which on your urine,
So loke and gaze and stare against the sun,
For all your craft and study of medicine,
All the practike and science that ye can,
Your life course so far forth is runne,
Ayein my might your craft may not endure,
For all the gold that thereby you have wonne,
Good leech is he that himself can recure.

The Physitian maketh Answer.

Full long agoon that I unto Physike,
Set my wit and eke my diligence,
In speculatif, and also in practike,
To great a name through mine excellence,
To fynd out against Pestilence,
Preservatives to staunche it and to fine,
But I dare shortly in sentence,
Say that against death is worth no medicine.

Death speaketh to the Amorous Squire.

By that be gentle so fresh and amorous,
Of yeres young, flourishing in your grene age,
Lusty, fre of hert, and eke desirous,
Full of devises and chaunge in your courage,
Pleasant of port, of loke, and of visage,
But all shall turne into ashes dead,
For all beauty is but a faynt ymage,
Which stealeth away, or folks can take hede.

The Squire maketh Answer.

Alas, alas, I can nowre no succour,
Against death for my selfe provide,
Adue of youth the lusty fresh flower,
Adue vain-glory of beauty, and the provide,
Adue all service of the god Cupide,
Adue my Ladies so fresh, so well beseyn,
For agayn death nothing may abide,
And windes great gon down with little reyn.

Death speaketh to the Gentlewoman.

Come forth mistress of yeers yong and grene
Which hold your self of beauty sovereign,
As fayre as ye was whilom Polyrene,
Penelope, and the Queen Helein.
Yet on this daunce they went both thweyne,
And so shall ye for all your straungenesse,
If danger long in love hath lad you reyne,
Arested is your chaunge of doublenesse.

The Gentlewoman maketh Answer.

O Cruel death that spareth none estate
To old and young thou art indifferent,
To my beauty thou hast said check mate,
So hasty is thy mortal judgment.
For in mine youth this was my entent,
To my service many man to have lured,
But she is a fool shortly in sentment,
That in her beauty is to much assured.

Death speaketh to the Man of Law.

Sir advocate short processe for to make,
We mot come plete afore the high Iudge,
Many quarels ye have undertake,
And for lucre done to folke refuge.
But my fraunchise is so large and huge,
That counsaill none awayle may but trouth,
He scapeth wisely of death, the great deluge,
Tofore the dome, who is nought teint with slouth.

The Man of Law maketh Answer.

Of right and reason by Natures law,
I can nought putten against death no defence
For all my wit, nor for all my gret prudence,
To appeal from his dreadful sentence.
Nothor by no sleight me kepen or withdrau
Nor nothing in earth may a man preserve,
Again his might to make resistance,
God quiteth all men like as they deserve.

Death speaketh to Mr. John Rikil Tregetour.

Master John Rikil whilom Tregetour,
Of noble Henry king of England,
And of France the mighty Conquerour,
For al the sleights and turning of thine hond,
Thou must come nere my daunce to understond
Nought may avail all thy conclusions
For death shortly nother on sea ne lond,
Is not deceived by none illusions.

The Tregetour maketh Answer.

What may availe magike naturall,
Or any craft shewed by appearance,
Or course of starres above celestiaall,
Or of the heavens all the influence,
Against death to stond at defence,
Legerdemain now helpeth me right nought,
Farewell my craft and such sapience,
For death no maistries hath y wrought.

Death speaketh to the Person.

O Sir curat that been now here present,
That had your worldly inclination,
Your heart entere, your study and entent,
Most of your tithes and your oblation,
Which should have be of conversation,
Mirrour to other light and exemplary,
Like your desert shall be your guerdon,
And to every labour due is the salary.

The Person maketh Answer.

Wagge my will I must condescend,
For death assayleth every lively thing,
Here in this world who can comprehend,
His sodain stroke and his unwary turning,
Farewel tithes, and farewel mine offering,
I mot go coumpten by ord^r by and by,
And for my sheep make a just reckoning,
And who that so him quiteth I hold he is happy.

Death speaketh to the Turrour.

Haster Turrour which that at assises,
And at Sheres Quests didst embrace,
Deper didst lond like to thy devises,
And who most gave most stode in thy grace.
The poor man lost both lond and place,
For gold thou couldest folke disherite,
But now let see with thy taint face,
Tofore the Judge how canst thee quite.

The Turrour maketh Answer.

Whilom I was cleyed in my countrey,
The bestweather and that was not alight,
Nought loved but drad of high and low degree,
For whom me list by craft I could endite.
Wongen the true and the these respite,
All the countrey by my word was lad,
But I dare sein shortly for to write,
Of my death many a man is glad.

Death speaketh to the Minstral.

O Thou minstral that can so note and pipe,
Unto folke for to done pleasaunce,
By the right hond I shall anon thee gripe,
With these other to gone upon my daunce.
There is no scape nother avoydaunce,
On no side to contune my sentence,
For in Musike my craft, and accordaunce,
Who maister is between his sentence.

The Minstral maketh Answer.

This new daunce is to me so straunge,
Wonder divers and passingly contrary,
The dreadeful footing doth so oft chaunge,
And the measures so oft sith vary.
Which unto me is now nothing necessary,
If it were so that I might assert,
But many a man if I shall nought tary,
Oft daunseth but nothing of hert.

Death speaketh to the Labourer.

Thou Labourer which in sorrow and peyn,
Hast lad thy life in great travayle,
We must eke dance and therefore nought disdein,
For if you do it may thee nought avayle,
And cause why that I thee assayle,
As onely this fro thee to discever
The false world that can so folkes fayle
He is a fool that weneth to liven ever.

The Labourer maketh Answer.

I have wished after death full oft,
Albe that I would have fled him now,
I had lever to have lyen unsoft,
In wind and rain to have gon at the plow,
With spade and pikys laboured for my prowe,
Dolven and ditched and at the cart gone,
For I may say and tell platly how,
In this world there is rest none.

Death speaketh to the Frere Menor.

Sir Cordelere to you mine hand is raught
You to this daunce to conuey and lead,
Which in your preaching han ful oft ytaught
How that I am most gastful for to drede
Albe that folke take therto none heed,
Yet is there none so strong, ne so hardy,
But death dare him rest, and let for no mede,
For death every houre is present and ready.

The Frere maketh Answer.

What may this be that in this world no man
Here to abide may have no surety
Strength, riches, nor what so that he can,
Of worldly wisdom all is but vanity,
In great estate nor in poverty,
Is nothing found that may his death defend,
For which I say to high and low degree,
Wise is that sinner that doth his life amend.

Death speaketh to the Child.

Little Faunte that wert but late borne,
Shape in this world to have no plasaunce,
We must with other that gone herebeforne,
Be lad in hast by fatal ordinance,
Learne of new to gone on my daunce,
There may none age escape insoth theretro,
Let every wight have this in remembrance,
Who lengest liveth most shall suffer woe.

The Young Child maketh Answer.

A A, a, a, woorde I canot speake,
I am so yonge I was borne yesterday,
Death is so hasty on me to be breake,
And list no lenger to make no delay.
I am but now borne, and now I go my way,
Of me no more to tele shall be told,
The will of God no man withstond may,
As soon dyeth a yong as an old.

Death speaketh to the Young Clerk.

O ye sir Clerk suppose ye to be free,
Fro my daunce, or your selfe defend,
That wend have risen unto high degree,
Of Benefice or some great Prebend.
Who climbeth higheft, sometime shall descend,
Let no man grutch against his fortune,
But take at gree whatever God him send,
Which punisheth all when time is oportune.

The Clerk maketh Answer.

Shall I that am so yong a Clerk now die,
Of my service and have no better guerdon,
Is there no gayn ne no better way,
No better fraunchise nor protection?
Death maketh allway a short conclusion,
To late ware when men be on the brinke,
The world shall faile, and all possession,
For much faileth of thing that folkes thinke.

Death speaketh to the Hermite.

Ye that have lived long in wilderness
And there continued long in abstinence,
At the last yet ye mot you dresse,
Of my daunce to have experiences.
For there against is no resistance,
Take now leave of thine Hermitage,
Wherfore every man advert to this sentence,
That this life here is no sure heritage.

The Hermite maketh Answer.

To live in desert called solitary,
May again death have respite none nor space,
At unset houre his coming doth not tary,
And for my part welcome by Gods grace.
Thanking him with humble chere and face,
Of all his gifts and great haboundance,
Finally affirming in this place,
No man is rich that lacketh sufferance.

Death speaketh to the Hermite again.

That is well said, and thus should every wight,
Thanken his God and all wits dress,
To love and dread him with all his heart and might,
Sith death to escape may be no sikerness.
As men deserve, God quitteth of rightwisnesse,
To rich and poor upon every side,
A better lesson there can no clerke expresse,
Than till to morrow is no man sure to abide.

The King eaten of Worms.

Ye folke that look upon this portrature,
Beholding here all estates daunce,
Seeth what ye have been, and what is your nature
Beat unto worms nought els in substance,
And have this mirrour aye in remembrance,
How I lye here whilom crowned King,
To all estates a true resemblance,
That worms food is the fine of your living.

Machabree the Doctor.

Man is nought els platly for to think,
But as wind which is transitory,
Passing ay forth, whether he wake or winke
Toward this dance haveth this in memory.
Remembring ay there is no better victory,
In this life here then fly, sin at the least:
Then shall ye reign in paradise with glory,
Happy is he that maketh in heaven his feast.

Yet there be folke mo than six or seven,
Recheles of life in many maner wise,
Like as there were hell none nor heaven,
Such false errour let every man despise.
For holy saints and old clerkes wise,
Written contrary her falseness to defame,
To liven well take this for the best emprise,
Is worth much when men should hence pass.

Reuoy of the Translatour.

O ye my Lords and Masters in all fear
Of aventure, that shall this daunce reade,
Lowly I pray with all my heart entere,
To correct whereras you see nede.
For nought elles I aske for my mede,
But goodly support of this translatioun,
And with favour to suppothwile drede,
Beninglye in your correction.

Out of the French I drough it of intent,
Not word by word, but following in substance
And from Paris to England it sent,
Only of purpose you to do pleasance.
Have me excused, my name is John Lidgate,
Rude of language, I was not borne in France,
Her curious Writers in English to translate
Of other tong I have no suffisance.

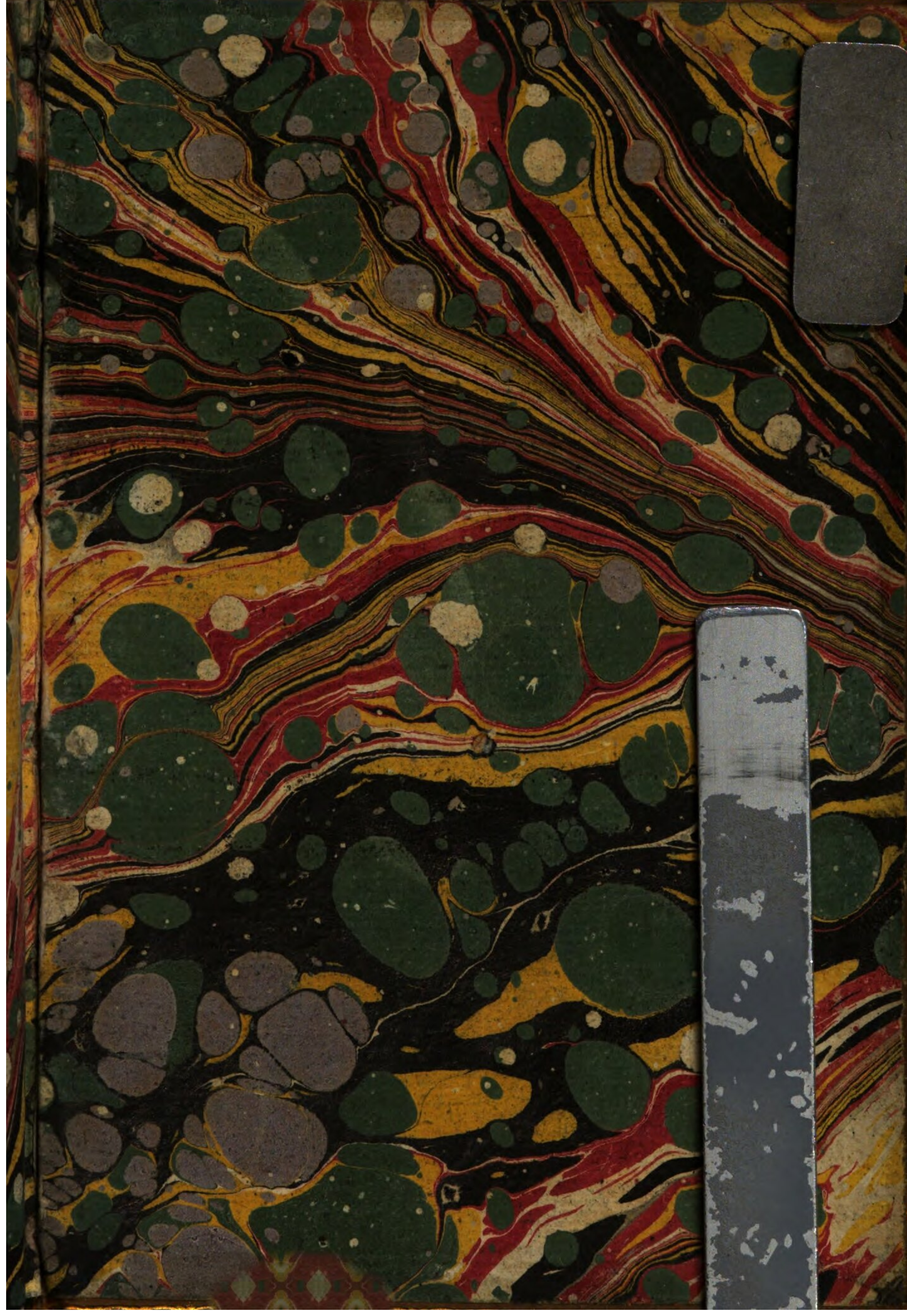
Here endeth the Daunce of Macabree.

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